



HOLY CROSS TRACTS

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The Saints

BY LOREN N. GAVITT

One of the great privileges of the Christian religion, when it is practised in its fulness, is familiarity with the saints in heaven. If the teaching of Christianity is true, the saints are living perfect human lives in the unimagined glory of heaven. This means that the saints are engaged in some sort of activity, for the very meaning of the word "life" is activity, and if the saints were not active in some way, they would not really be living at all. Certainly this activity is limited in its scope as compared to the scope of life on earth. The saints do not have to struggle to earn food, shelter and clothing, to make provision for possible illness, to find recreation to repair tired nerves. All of these things, which make up so much of our activity on earth, are meaningless in the heavenly sphere of life. But there is open to them a whole range of spiritual activity in thinking, worshipping and praying.

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The worship of the "Lamb as it had been slain" is of the very essence of the heavenly life, for the saints have reached the heights of heaven only through the power of our Lord's sacrifice. On earth we participate in this activity of the saints every time we are obedient to our Lord's command, "Do this in remembrance of me." So at every Mass we make the conscious effort to join in the activity of heaven, for we kneel "with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven." Without the earthly Eucharist, participation in this aspect of the heavenly life would be impossible and this is why we have a part in the Mass regularly and frequently.

We must not, however, make the serious mistake of supposing that the devotion of the saints in heaven is entirely self-centered. The thing which characterizes the saintly life on earth is interest in others and the mere passage from earth to heaven does not alter this characteristic of sanctity. So the saints in heaven are interested in us on earth—our struggles, our victories, our welfare—and this interest finds its expression in fervent prayer to God for us. If their interest did not express itself in this way, it would be meaningless. So we may be sure that the saints pray for our welfare.

One of the reasons why men today are not more conscious of this mighty power operating

for their welfare is that they are not accustomed quite simply to ask the saints to pray for them. No part of the Church has ever said that invocation of the saints is necessary to salvation and all those good people who are so fearful of the practice will never be lost because they do not speak to the saints in prayer. But they are losing much of the comfort, help and richness which Christianity provides. No one can regularly ask the saints to pray for them without a new consciousness of a strong power working for them and without a constantly renewed sense of the reality of God and of the spiritual world.

No doubt there are many questions about this practice which cannot be answered because the whole matter of prayer must always be mysterious. Probably the most persistent question is, "How do the saints hear us?" This question should not trouble us today as much as it troubled former generations, for we have the mystery of radio where we are accustomed to listening to men on the other side of the world speaking. The answer to the question comes when we remember that the saints see all reality in the unveiled sight of God. As they gaze into absolute Reality, they are conscious of our little aspirations which are reflected in the all-embracing Heart of God.

Here, then, is a way to make our daily re-

ligion more real. Become familiar with the saints who are living now—full human lives in the heavenly sphere. Speak to them. Ask their prayers. And you will come to a new realization that the power working for you is far greater than those powers of which you are so bitterly conscious, which are working against you.

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